


Lakota language

Lakota (*Lakǰótiyapi*), also referred to as **Lakhota**, **Teton** or **Teton Sioux**, is a Siouan language spoken by the Lakota people of the Sioux tribes. Though generally taught and considered by speakers as a separate language, Lakota is mutually intelligible with the other two languages (such as Dakota language), and is considered by most linguists as one of the three major varieties of the Sioux language.

Speakers of the Lakota language make up one of the largest Native American language speech communities in the United States, with approximately 2,000 speakers, who live mostly in the northern plains states of North Dakota and South Dakota.^[3] There is a Lakota language program online available for children to use.^[4] There is also a Lakota Language Program with classes for children at Red Cloud Indian School.^[5]

The language was first put into written form by European-American missionaries around 1840. It has since evolved to reflect contemporary needs and usage.

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Lakota	
<i>Lakǰótiyapi</i>	
Pronunciation	[la. ˈkxo.ti.ja.pi]
Native to	United States, with some speakers in Canada
Region	Primarily North Dakota and South Dakota, but also northern Nebraska, southern Minnesota, and northern Montana
Ethnicity	Teton Sioux
Native speakers	2,100, 29% of ethnic population (1997) ^[1]
Language family	Siouan <ul style="list-style-type: none">Western Siouan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mississippi Valley Siouan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dakotan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sioux<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lakota
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	lkt
Glottolog	lako1247 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/lako1247) ^[2]
	
Map of core pre-contact Lakota territory	

Ablaut

A/aŋ-ablaut

E-ablaut

1. Last word in sentence

2. Followed by a word which triggers e-ablaut

Iŋ-ablaut

Phrases

Learning Lakota: language revitalization efforts

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Play media

Junior Garcia, an activist and teacher of the Lakota Nation, speaking Lakota



Lakota language bowl at the Lakota Nation Invitational

History and origin

The Lakota people's creation stories say that language originated from the creation of the tribe.^{[6][7]}

Phonology

Vowels

Lakota has five oral vowels, /i e a o u/, and three nasal vowels, /ĩ ã ũ/ (phonetically [ĩ ẽ õ]). Lakota /e/ and /o/ are said to be more open than the corresponding cardinal vowels, perhaps closer to [ɛ] and [ɔ]. Orthographically, the nasal vowels are written with a following ⟨ŋ⟩, ⟨ɳ⟩, or ⟨ɴ⟩; historically, these were written with ogoneks underneath, ⟨ḭ ḡ ṡ⟩.^[8] No syllables end with consonantal /n/.

		Front	Central	Back
Close/High	oral	i		u
	nasal	ĩ		ũ
Mid		e		o
Open/Low	oral		a	
	nasal		ã	

A neutral vowel (schwa) is automatically inserted between certain consonants, e.g. into the pairs ⟨gl⟩, ⟨bl⟩ and ⟨gm⟩. So the clan name written phonemically as ⟨Oglala⟩ has become the place name Ogallala.

Consonants

		<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Postalveolar</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Uvular</u> ^{[9][10]}	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Nasals</u>		m [m]		n [n]				
Plosives and affricates	<u>voiceless</u>	p [p]	t [t]		č [tʃ]	k [k]		' [ʔ]
	<u>voiced</u>	b [b]				g [g]		
	<u>aspirated</u>	ph [p ^h] / p̣h [p [×]]	th [t ^h] / ṭh [t [×]]		čh [tʃ ^h]	kh [k ^h] / ḳh [k [×]]		
	<u>ejective</u>	p' [pʼ]	t' [tʼ]		č' [tʃʼ]	k' [kʼ]		
Fricative	<u>voiceless</u>			s [s]	š [ʃ]		ħ [χ]	
	<u>voiced</u>			z [z]	ž [ʒ]		ǵ [ʁ]	
	<u>ejective</u> ^[11]			s' [sʼ]	š' [ʃʼ]		ħ' [χʼ]	
<u>Approximant</u>		w [w]		l [l]	y [j]			h [h]

The voiced uvular fricative /ʁ/ becomes a uvular trill ([ʀ]) before /i/^{[9][10]} and in fast speech it is often realized as a voiced velar fricative [ɣ]. The voiceless aspirated plosives have two allophonic variants each: those with a delay in voicing ([p^h t^h k^h]), and those with velar friction ([p[×] t[×] k[×]]), which occur before /a/, /ā/, /o/, /ī/, and /ū/ (thus, *lakhóta*, /la'k^hota/ is phonetically [la'k[×]ota]). For some speakers, there is a phonemic distinction between the two, and both occur before /e/. No such variation occurs for the affricate /tʃ^h/. Some orthographies mark this distinction; others do not. The uvular fricatives /χ/ and /ʁ/ are commonly spelled ⟨ħ⟩ and ⟨ǵ⟩.

All monomorphemic words have one vowel which carries primary stress and has a higher tone than all other vowels in the word. This is generally the vowel of the second syllable of the word, but often the first syllable can be stressed, and occasionally other syllables as well. Stress is generally indicated with an acute accent: ⟨á⟩, etc. Compound words will have stressed vowels in each component; proper spelling will write compounds with a hyphen. Thus *máza-ská*, literally "metal-white", i.e. "silver; money" has two stressed vowels, the first *a* in each component. If it were written without the hyphen, as *mazaska*, it would imply a single main stress.

Orthography

The majority of educational institutions across Lakota country adopted the writing system of the *New Lakota Dictionary* as the standard orthography. It is used, among other places, at Sitting Bull College, Oglala Lakota College, by all schools of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, by the majority of teachers of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and in almost all schools on Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations.^[11] Sinte Gleska University is said to have been using an orthography developed by Albert White Hat,^[12] but apart from one elementary level textbook, no literature, learning materials, or dictionaries have been developed with this orthography. The spelling system is not used by Sinte Gleska University language instructors during classes. Historically several orthographies as well as ad hoc spelling have been used to write the Lakota language.^{[13][14][15]}

The spelling system of the *New Lakota Dictionary* is presented below:

The vowels are *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*; nasal vowels are *aŋ*, *iŋ*, *uŋ*. Pitch accent is marked with an acute accent: *á*, *é*, *í*, *ó*, *ú*, *án̄*, *ín̄*, *ún̄* on stressed vowels (which receive a higher tone than non-stressed ones)^[16]

The following consonants approximate their IPA values: *b, g, h, k, l, m, n, ŋ, p, s, t, w, z*. *Y* has its English value of /j/. An apostrophe, ' , is used for the glottal stop.

A caron is used for sounds, other than /ŋ/, which are not written with Latin letters in the IPA: *č* /tʃ/, *ǵ* /ɣ/, *ħ* /χ/, *š* /ʃ/, *ž* /ʒ/. Aspirates are written with *h*: *čh, kh, ph, th*, and velar frication with *ħ*: *kħ, pħ, tħ*. Ejectives are written with an apostrophe: *č', ħ', k', p', s', š', t'*.

The spelling used in modern popular texts is often written without diacritics. Besides failing to mark stress, this also results in the confusion of numerous consonants: /s/ and /ʃ/ are both written *s*, /h/ and /χ/ are both written *h*, and the aspirate stops are written like the unaspirates, as *p, t, c, k*.

Alphabet

Standard Lakota Orthography, as used by the majority of schools, is in principle phonemic, which means that each character (grapheme) represents one distinctive sound (phoneme), except for the distinction between glottal and velar aspiration, which is treated phonetically.

Lakota alphabet

Letter	Name of the letter	Usual phonetic value (IPA)
A a	a	[a]
Aŋ aŋ	aŋ	[ä]
B b	be	[b]
Č č	ču	[tʃ]
Čh čh	čhi	[tʃ ^h]
Č' č'	č'ó	[tʃ ']
E e	e	[ɛ]
G g	gli	[g]
Ǵ ǵ	ǵu	[ɣ] / [ʀ]
H h	ha	[h]
Ĥ ĥ	ħe	[χ]
I i	i	[ɪ]
Iŋ iŋ	iŋ	[ĩ]
K k	ku	[k]
Kh kh	khi	[k ^h]
Kħ kħ	kħa	[k [×]]
K' k'	k'o	[k ']
L l	la	[l]
M m	ma	[m]
N n	na	[n]
O o	o	[ɔ]
P p	pu	[p]

Ph ph	phi	[p ^h]
Pḥ pḥ	pḥa	[p ^x]
P' p'	p'o	[p']
S s	sa	[s]
Š š	še	[ʃ]
T t	tu	[t]
Th th	thi	[t ^h]
Tḥ tḥ	tḥa	[t ^x]
T' t'	t'o	[t']
U u	u	[ʊ]
Uŋ uŋ	uŋ	[ʊ̃]
W w	wa	[w]
Y y	ya	[j]
Z z	za	[z]
Ž ž	že	[ʒ]
'	khéze	[ʔ]

All digraphs (i.e. characters created by two letters, such as kh, kḥ, k') are treated as groups of individual letters in alphabetization. Thus for example the word *čhín* precedes *čónala* in a dictionary.

Phonological processes

A common phonological process which occurs in rapid speech is *vowel contraction*, which generally results from the loss of an intervocalic glide. Vowel contraction results in phonetic long vowels (phonemically a sequence of two identical vowels), with falling pitch if the first underlying vowel is stressed, and rising pitch if the second underlying vowel is stressed: *kê:* (falling tone), "he said that", from *kéye*; *hă:pi* (rising tone), "clothing", from *hayápi*. If one of the vowels is nasalized, the resulting long vowel is also nasalized: *čhaŋ̃:pi*, "sugar", from *čhaŋháp̃i*.^[9]

When two vowels of unequal height contract, or when feature contrasts exist between the vowels and the glide, two new phonetic vowels, [æ:] and [ɔ:], result:^[9] *iyă:*, "he left for there", from *iyáye*; *mitḥa:*, "it's mine", from *mitháwa*.

The plural enclitic *=pi* is frequently changed in rapid speech when preceding the enclitics *=kte*, *=kin*, *=kštó*, or *=na*. If the vowel preceding *=pi* is high/open, *=pi* becomes [u]; if the vowel is non-high (mid or closed), *=pi* becomes [o] (if the preceding vowel is nasalized, then the resulting vowel is also nasalized): *hi=pi=kte*, "they will arrive here", [hiukte]; *yatkán=pi=na*, "they drank it and...", [jatkǽōna].^[9]

Lakota also exhibits some traces of sound symbolism among fricatives, where the point of articulation changes to reflect intensity: *zí*, "it's yellow", *ží*, "it's tawny", *ǵí*, "it's brown".^[17] (Compare with the similar examples in Mandan.)

Grammar

Word order

The basic word order of Lakota is subject–object–verb, although the order can be changed for expressive purposes (placing the object before the subject to bring the object into focus or placing the subject after the verb to emphasize its status as established information). It is postpositional, with adpositions occurring after the head nouns: *mas'óphiye él*, "at the store" (literally 'store at'); *thípi=kin ókšan*, "around the house" (literally 'house=the around') (Rood and Taylor 1996).

Rood and Taylor (1996) suggest the following template for basic word order. Items in parenthesis are optional; only the verb is required. It is therefore possible to produce a grammatical sentence that contains only a verb.

(interjection) (conjunction) (adverb(s)) (nominal) (nominal) (nominal) (adverb(s)) verb
(enclitic(s)) (conjunction)

Interjections

When interjections are used, they begin the sentence or end it. A small number of interjections are used only by one gender, for instance the interjection expressing disbelief is *ečéš* for women but *hóh* for men; for calling attention women say *mán* while men use *wán*. Most interjections, however, are used by both genders.^[11]

Conjunctions

It is common for a sentence to begin with a conjunction. Both *čhan ké* and *yunkháŋ* can be translated as *and*; *k'éyaš* is similar to English *but*. Each of these conjunctions joins clauses. In addition, the conjunction *na* joins nouns or phrases.

Adverbs, postpositions and derived modifiers

Lakota uses postpositions, which are similar to English prepositions, but follow their noun complement. Adverbs or postpositional phrases can describe manner, location, or reason. There are also interrogative adverbs, which are used to form questions.

Ullrich (2018) is the first one to show that many words traditionally classified as adverbs actually do not function adverbially and that a better term for these words is 'derived modifiers'. A typical example is the word *héčhel*, which is traditionally translated with "in that way" but when used with transitive verbs, it always modifies the object argument and not the verb, as in *Héčhel waŋbláke*. 'I saw such a thing' (and not *'In such a way I saw it'). (<http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~rrgpage/rrg/Ullrich.pdf>)

Synonymity in the postpositions *él* and *ektá*

To the non-Lakota speaker, the postpositions *él* and *ektá* sound like they can be interchangeable, but although they are full synonyms of each other, they are used in different occasions. Semantically (word meaning), they are used as locational and directional tools. In the English language they can be compared to prepositions like "at", "in", and "on" (when used as locatives) on the one hand, and "at", "in", and "on" (when used as directionals), "to", "into", and "onto", on the other. (Pustet 2013)

A pointer for when to use *él* and when to use *ektá* can be determined by the concepts of location (motionless) or motion; and space vs. time. These features can produce four different combinations, also called semantic domains, which can be arranged as follows (Pustet 2013):

1. space / rest: "in the house" [thípi kiŋ él] (This sentence is only describing location of an object, no movement indicated)
2. space / motion: "to the house [thípi kiŋ ektá] (This sentence is referring to movement of a subject, it is directional in nature)
3. time / rest: "in the winter" [waníyetu kiŋ él] (This sentence refers to a static moment in time, which happens to be during winter)
4. time / motion: "in/towards the winter" [waníyetu kiŋ ektá] (Pustet 2013) (This sentence is delegated to time, but time which is soon to change to another season)

Summed up, when a context describes no motion, *él* is the appropriate postposition; when in motion, *ektá* is more appropriate. They are both used in matters of time and space.

Nouns and pronouns

As mentioned above, nominals are optional in Lakota, but when nouns appear the basic word order is subject–object–verb. Pronouns are not common, but may be used contrastively or emphatically.

Lakota has four articles: *waŋ* is indefinite, similar to English *a* or *an*, and *kiŋ* is definite, similar to English *the*. In addition, *waŋží* is an indefinite article used with hypothetical or irrealis objects, and *k'uŋ* is a definite article used with nouns that have been mentioned previously.

Demonstratives

There are also nine demonstratives, which can function either as pronouns or as determiners.

	Distance from speaker		
	near the speaker	near the listener	away from the speaker and listener
singular	<i>lé</i>	<i>hé</i>	<i>ká</i>
dual	<i>lenáos</i>	<i>henáos</i>	<i>kanáos</i>
plural	<i>lená</i>	<i>hená</i>	<i>kaná</i>

In traditional grammars, the three groups of demonstratives are described as pointing to objects "near", "neutral distance" and "far", but New Lakota Dictionary (Second Edition, 2012) is the first publication to show that the choice of demonstratives is in fact based on the position respective to the speaker and the listener, and that the *ká* series refer to objects away from both the speaker and listener.

Verbs

Verbs are the only word class that are obligatory in a Lakota sentence. Verbs can be active, naming an action, or stative, describing a property. (Note that in English, such descriptions are usually made with adjectives.)

Verbs are inflected for first-, second- or third person, and for singular, dual or plural grammatical number.

Morphology

Verb inflection

There are two paradigms for verb inflection. One set of morphemes indicates the person and number of the subject of active verbs. The other set of morphemes agrees with the object of transitive action verbs *or* the subject of stative verbs.^[9]

Most of the morphemes in each paradigm are prefixes, but plural subjects are marked with a suffix and third-person plural objects with an infix.

First person arguments may be singular, dual, or plural; second or third person arguments may be singular or plural.

Subject of active verbs

	singular	dual	plural
first person	wa-	uŋ(k)-	uŋ(k)- ... -pi
second person	ya-		ya- ... -pi
third person	<i>unmarked</i>		-pi

Examples: *máni* "He walks." *mánipi* "They walk."

Subject of stative verbs

	singular	dual	plural
first person	ma-	uŋ(k)-	uŋ(k)- ... -pi
second person	ni-		ni- ... -pi
third person	<i>unmarked</i>		-pi

Object of transitive verbs

	singular	dual	plural
first person	ma-		uŋ(k)- ... -pi
second person	ni-		ni- ... -pi
third person	<i>unmarked</i>		-wicha-

Example: *waŋwíčhayanke* "He looked at them" from *waŋyáŋka* "to look at something/somebody".

Subject and object pronouns in one verb^[11]

If both the subject and object need to be marked, two affixes occur on the verb. Below is a table illustrating this. Subject affixes are marked in *italics* and object affixes are marked in underline. Some affixes encompass both subject and object (such as *čhi-* ...). The symbol \emptyset indicates a lack of marking for a particular subject/object (as in the case of 3rd Person Singular forms). Cells with three forms indicate Class I, Class II, and Class III verb forms in this order.

	<u>me</u>	<u>you (sg.)</u>	<u>him/her/it; them (inanimate)</u>	<u>us</u>	<u>you (pl.)</u>	<u>them (animate)</u>
<i>I</i>		<i>čhi</i> ¹ ...	<i>wa</i> Ø- ... <i>bl</i> Ø- ... <i>m</i> Ø- ...		<i>čhi</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>wičhawa</i> - ... <i>wičhabl</i> - ... <i>wičham</i> - ...
<i>you (sg.)</i>	<i>maya</i> - ... <i>mayal</i> ² ... <i>mayan</i> - ...		<i>ya</i> Ø- ... <i>l</i> Ø- ... <i>n</i> Ø- ...	<i>uŋya</i> - ... - <i>pi</i> <i>uŋl</i> - ... - <i>pi</i> <i>uŋn</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>		<i>wičhaya</i> - ... <i>wičhal</i> - ... <i>wičhan</i> - ...
<i>he/she/it</i>	<i>ma</i> Ø- ...	<i>ni</i> Ø- ...	Ø Ø- ...	<i>uŋ(k)</i> Ø- ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>ni</i> Ø- ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>wičha</i> Ø- ...
<i>we</i>		<i>uŋni</i> ³ ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>uŋ(k)</i> Ø- ... - <i>pi</i>		<i>uŋni</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>wičha</i> <i>uŋ(k)</i> ⁴ ... - <i>pi</i>
<i>you (pl.)</i>	<i>maya</i> - ... - <i>pi</i> <i>mayal</i> - ... - <i>pi</i> <i>mayan</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>		<i>ya</i> Ø- ... - <i>pi</i> <i>l</i> Ø- ... - <i>pi</i> <i>n</i> Ø- ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>uŋya</i> - ... - <i>pi</i> ⁵ <i>uŋl</i> - ... - <i>pi</i> <i>uŋn</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>		<i>wičhaya</i> - ... - <i>pi</i> <i>wičhal</i> - ... - <i>pi</i> <i>wičhan</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>
<i>they</i>	<i>ma</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>ni</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>	... -Ø <i>pi</i>	<i>uŋ</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>ni</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>	<i>wičha</i> - ... - <i>pi</i>

- ¹ The affix *čhi*- covers cases where I-subject and you-object occurs in transitive verbs.
- ² Class II and Class III verbs have irregular *yal*- and *yan*- respectively.
- ³ These prefixes are separated when *uŋ(k)*- must be prefixed while *ni*- et al. must be infixed.

Example: *uŋkánipǎhepi* "We are waiting for you" from *apǎhé* "to wait for somebody".

- ⁴ *uŋ(k)*- precedes all affixes except *wičha*-. In the last column, verbs which require *uŋ(k)*- to be prefixed are more complex because of competing rules: *uŋ(k)*- must be prefixed, but must also follow *wičha*-. Most speakers resolve this issue by infixing *wičha**uŋ(k)* after the initial vowel, then repeating the initial vowel again.

Example: *iwíčhaŋkičupi* "We took them" from *ičú* "to take something/somebody".

- ⁵ Since the suffix *-pi* can appear only once in each verb, but may pluralize either subject or object (or both), some ambiguity exists in the forms: *uŋ*- ... -*pi*, *uŋni*- ... -*pi*, and *uŋya*-/*uŋl*-/*uŋn*- ... -*pi*.

Enclitics

Lakota has a number of enclitic particles which follow the verb, many of which differ depending on whether the speaker is male or female.

Some enclitics indicate the aspect, mood, or number of the verb they follow. There are also various interrogative enclitics, which in addition to marking an utterance as a question show finer distinctions of meaning. For example, while *he* is the usual question-marking enclitic, *huŋwó* is used for rhetorical questions or in formal oratory, and the dubitative *wa* functions somewhat like a tag question in English (Rood and Taylor 1996; Buchel 1983). (See also the section below on men and women's speech.)

Men's and women's speech

A small number of enclitics (approximately eight) differ in form based on the gender of the speaker. *Yeló* (men) *ye* (women) mark mild assertions. *Kštó* (women only according to most sources) marks strong assertion. *Yo* (men) and *ye* (women) mark neutral commands, *yetǎ́* (men) and *nithǎ́* (women) mark familiar, and *ye* (both men and women) and *na* mark requests. *He* is used by both genders to mark direct questions, but men also use *hųwó* in more formal situations. *So* (men) and *se* (women) mark dubitative questions (where the person being asked is not assumed to know the answer).

While many native speakers and linguists agree that certain enclitics are associated with particular genders, such usage may not be exclusive. That is, individual men sometimes use enclitics associated with women, and vice versa (Trechter 1999).

Examples of enclitic usage

Enclitic	Meaning	Example ^[18]	Translation
<i>hAŋ</i>	continuous	yá-he	"was going"
<i>pi</i>	plural	iyáyapi	"they left"
<i>la</i>	diminutive	záptanla	"only five"
<i>kA</i>	attenuative	wašteke	"somewhat good"
<i>ktA</i>	irrealis	uŋyín kte	"you and I will go" (future)
<i>šni</i>	negative	hiyú šni	"he/she/it did not come out"
<i>s'a</i>	repeating	eyápi s'a	"they often say"
<i>séčA</i>	conjecture	ú kte séče	"he might come"
<i>yeló</i>	assertion (masc)	blé ló	"I went there (I assert)"
<i>yé</i>	assertion (fem)	hí yé	"he came (I assert)"
<i>he</i>	interrogative	Táku kǎoyákipǎ he?	"What do you fear?"
<i>hųwó</i>	interrogative (masc. formal)	Tókhiya lá hųwó?	"Where are you going?"
<i>hųwé</i>	interrogative (fem. formal, obsolete)	Hé tákula hųwé?	"What is this little thing?"
<i>waŋ</i>	dubitative question	séča waŋ	"can it be as it seems?"
<i>škhé</i>	evidential	yá-ha škhé	"he was going, I understand"
<i>kéye</i>	evidential (hearsay)	yápi kéye	"they went, they say"

Ablaut

- All examples are taken from the *New Lakota Dictionary*.

The term "ablaut" refers to the tendency of some words to change their final vowel in certain situations. Compare these sentences.

Šúnka kiŋ sápa čha waŋbláke.
 Šúnka kiŋ sápe.
 Šúnka kiŋ sápiŋ na tǎ́hanka.

The last vowel in the word "SápA" changed each time. This vowel change is called "ablaut". Words which undergo this change are referred to as A-words, since, in dictionary citations, they are written ending in either -A or -Aŋ. These words are never written with a final capital letter in actual texts. Derivatives of these words generally take the ablaut as well, however there are exceptions.

There are three forms for ablauted words: *-a/-aŋ*, *-e*, *-iŋ*. These are referred to as *a/aŋ-ablaut*, *e-ablaut*, and *iŋ-ablaut* respectively. Some words are ablauted by some and not others, like "gray" *hóta* or *hótA*. Ablaut always depends on what word follows the ablauted word.

A/aŋ-ablaut

This is the basic form of the word, and is used everywhere in which the other forms are not utilized.

E-ablaut

There are two cases in which e-ablaut is used.

1. Last word in the sentence
2. Followed by a word which triggers e-ablaut

1. Last word in sentence

Examples

Héčhiya yé He went there. (e-ablaut of the verb *yÁ*)

Yúte She ate it. (e-ablaut of the verb *yútA*)

Thípi kiŋ pahá akáŋI hé. The house stands on a cliff. (e-ablaut of the verb *hÁŋ*)

2. Followed by a word which triggers e-ablaut

There are three classes of words which trigger e-ablaut

- a) various enclitics, such as *hča*, *hčŋ*, *iŋchéye*, *kačháš*, *kiló*, *kštó*, *któk*, *lakha*, *-la*, *láh*, *láhčaka*, *ló*, *séčA*, *sékse*, *s'eléchheča*, *so*, *s'a*, *s'e*, *šaŋ*, *šni*, *uŋštó*
- b) some conjunctions and articles, such as *kiŋ*, *kiŋháŋ*, *k'éáš*, *k'uŋ*, *eháŋtaŋš*
- c) some auxiliary verbs, such as *kapíŋ*, *kiníča* (*kiníl*), *lakA* (*la*), *kúnzA*, *phiča*, *ši*, *wačhíŋ*, *-yA*, *-khiyA*

Examples

Škáte šni. He did not play. (enclitic)

Škáte s'a. He plays often. (enclitic)

Škáte ló. He plays. (enclitic (marking assertion))

Okháte háŋtaŋ... If it is hot... (conjunctive)

Sápe kiŋ The black one (definite article)

Glé kúnze. He pretended to go home. (auxiliary verb)

Yatké-phiča. It is drinkable. (auxiliary verb)

Iŋ-ablaut

The *iŋ*-ablaut (pronounced *i* by some) occurs only before the following words:

ktA (irrealis enclitic)

yet hó (familiar command enclitic)

na, *naháŋ* (and)

naíŋš (or, and or)

yé (polite request or entreaty enclitic)

Examples

Wanyánkin yetǎ́hó. Take a look at this, real quick.

Yín kte. She will go.

Skúyín na wašté. It was sweet and good.

Wanyánkin yé. Please, look at it.

Phrases

"*Háu kǎ́holá*", literally "Hello, friend", is the most common greeting, and was transformed into the generic motion picture American Indian "How!", just as the traditional feathered headdress of the Teton was "given" to all movie Indians. As *háu* is the only word in Lakota which contains a diphthong, /au/, it may be a loanword from a non-Siouan language.^[9]

Other than using the word "friend", one often uses the word "cousin" or "cross-cousin" since everyone in the tribe was as family to each other. These words are very important to the speaker's tone of proper respect. The terms are as follow:^[11]

Tǎ́ŋháhŋši N - my male cross-cousin (man speaking, term of address)

Tǎ́ŋháhŋšitku N - his male cross-cousin

Tǎ́ŋháhŋšiyA V-CAUSATIVE - to have someone for a male cross-cousin

Haŋkáši N - my female cross-cousin (man speaking, term of address)

Haŋkášitku N - his female cross-cousin

HaŋkášiyA V-CAUSATIVE - to have someone for a female cross-cousin

(S)čépǎ́ŋhŋši N - my female cross-cousin (woman speaking, term of address)

(S)čépǎ́ŋhŋšitku N - her female cross-cousin

(S)čépǎ́ŋhŋšiyA V-CAUSATIVE - to have someone for a female cross-cousin

"šič'ěši" N - my male cross-cousin (woman speaking, term of address)

"šič'ěšitku" N - her male cross-cousin

"šič'ěšiyA" V-CAUSATIVE - to have someone for a male cross-cousin

Hakátaku N - her brothers and male cross cousins, his sisters and female cross-cousins (i.e. relative requiring respect)

HakátayA V-CAUSATIVE - to have someone for a sibling or cross-cousin of the opposite sex

Learning Lakota: language revitalization efforts

Assimilating indigenous tribes into the expanding American society of the late 19th and early 20th centuries depended on suppression or full eradication of each tribe's unique language as the central aspect of its culture. Government boarding schools that separated tribal children from their parents and relatives enforced this assimilation process by corporal punishment for speaking tribal languages (Powers). The Lakota language survived this suppression. "Lakota persisted through the recognized natural immersion afforded by daily conversation in the home, the community at reservation-wide events, even in texts written in the form of letters to family and friends. people demonstrated their cultural resilience through the positive application of spoken and written Lakota." (Powers)



Play media

Lakota prayer song recorded in 2013

Even so, employment opportunities were based on speaking English; a Lakota who was bilingual or spoke only English was more likely to be hired. (Powers)^[7]

Schools on the five Lakota reservation started offering Lakota language classes beginning in the early 1970s, but Lakota language instruction suffered very low quality primarily due to lack of linguistic and methodological background of the teachers. Positions of Lakota language teachers were filled with native Lakota speakers without teaching accreditation under the assumption that a native speaker is logically an effective teacher of the language. But for several decades Lakota instruction did not result in creating proficiency among graduates of reservation schools. Students and observers reported repeatedly that Lakota classes from elementary level all the way to college commonly involved mere rote memorization of isolated vocabulary items (usually the terms for colors, number and animals).

In the mid 1970s the situation with Lakota language instruction improved on the Rosebud Reservation where the Lakota Language and Culture department was established at the Sinte Glešká University under the chairmanship of Ben Black Bear, Jr., who promoted standardization of orthography and curricula. He employed college level textbooks and orthography developed by the Colorado University Lakota Project (CULP). A few years later Black Bear was replaced as a chair of the department by Albert White Hat who discontinued the use of the consistent phonemic orthography and the Colorado University textbooks. In 1992 White Hat published an elementary level textbook and promoted it as the only teaching material for schools of all levels in Rosebud. White Hat established his own orthography, one that is very diacritic heavy and impractical. This had a detrimental impact on the quality of instruction in Rosebud and resulted in almost complete disintegration of Lakota language teaching infrastructure in Rosebud, because school boards and administrators gradually lost trust in the effectiveness of Lakota language teachers and classes. By 2015, only one Rosebud school offered Lakota language classes and there were only 2 Lakota language teachers.

Lakota language classes continued to be offered between 1970s and 2000s on other Lakota reservations (Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River and Standing Rock), but the three decades did not result in developing any proficiency among students. The situation started improving gradually in the early 2000s when teacher training started to be offered to Lakota language teachers and especially after 2006 when the Lakota Summer Institute was established by the Lakota Language Consortium and the Sitting Bull College on Standing Rock. The institute offers high quality training for Lakota language teachers, educating them in Lakota linguistics and language teaching methodology. Since 2008 the institute also started offering classes for Lakota language learners.

By 2015, there has been a major improvement of Lakota language proficiency levels among students of reservation schools. This was due to teacher training available through the Lakota Summer Institute and to the adoption of consistent phonemic orthography introduced in the New Lakota Dictionary (2008) and the Lakota Grammar Handbook (2016). This orthography and the effective teaching methods enabled teachers and students for the first time to teach and learn correct pronunciation. It has been reported repeatedly that students are increasingly able to have Lakota conversations with elders. Revitalization efforts were further strengthened by the establishment of several Lakota language immersion schools (such as the Language Nest in Standing Rock and the immersion school in Oglala, Pine Ridge).

One of the most influential and consistent figures of the Lakota Language Revitalization has been Ben Black Bear, Jr., who established the Lakota Language Department at the Sinte Glešká University in 1970s. Since 2009 he has been teaching Lakota at the Lakota Summer Institute at Sitting Bull College in Standing Rock. He has been a long term board member of the Lakota Language Consortium and he co-authored the Lakota Audio Series and the Lakota Grammar Handbook, which is the most accurate grammar of the language and probably the most detailed grammar ever written for a Native American language.^[19]

In 2004 five Lakota tribes (Pine Ridge, Standing Rock, Rosebud, Cheyenne River and Lower Brule) united with second-language education professionals and academic linguists to form the Lakota Language Consortium,^[4] to produce and implement a comprehensive educational effort to standardize and professionalize Lakota language teaching in tribal and neighboring public and parochial schools. This intertribal movement has resulted in sequenced textbooks, audio materials, reference books and professional teacher trainings that create a new Lakota-centered career path. In November 2012, the incoming president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Bryan Brewer, announced that he intended "to lead a Lakota Language Revitalization Initiative that will focus on the creation and operation of Lakota language immersion schools and identifying all fluent Lakota speakers."^[20] A Lakota language immersion daycare center is scheduled to open at Pine Ridge.^[21]

As of 2012, Lakota immersion classes are provided for children in an experimental program at Sitting Bull College on the Standing Rock Reservation, where children speak only Lakota for their first year (Powers).^[22] As of 2014, it is estimated that about five percent of children age four to six on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation speak Lakota.^[23]

From 2009 to 2014 Lakota speakers could upload photos with Lakota language audio descriptions at the *LiveAndTell* website.^{[24][25]}

Lakota Language Education Program (LLEAP)

In 2011, Sitting Bull College (Fort Yates, North Dakota, Standing Rock) and the University of South Dakota began degree programs to create effective Lakota language teachers. By earning a Bachelor of Arts in Education at the University of South Dakota or a Bachelor of Science in Education at Sitting Bull College, students can major in "Lakota Language Teaching and Learning" as part of the Lakota Language Education Action Program, or LLEAP.

LLEAP is a four-year program designed to create at least 30 new Lakota language teachers by 2014, and was funded by \$2.4 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Education. At the end of the initial phase, SBC and USD will permanently offer the Lakota Language Teaching and Learning degree as part of their regular undergraduate Education curriculum. The current LLEAP students' tuition and expenses are covered by the grant from the U.S. Department of Education. LLEAP is the first program of its kind, offering courses to create effective teachers in order to save a Native American language from going extinct, and potentially educate the 120,000 prospective Lakota speakers in the 21st century.^[26]

Government support

In 1990, Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI) sponsored the Native American Languages Act in order to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedoms of Native people in America to practice, develop and conduct business in their native language. This law, which took effect on October 30, 1990, reversed over 200 years of American policy that would have otherwise eliminated the indigenous languages of the United States. This legislation gave support to tribal efforts to fund language education programs.^[27]

Self-study

Some resources exist for self-study of Lakota by a person with no or limited access to native speakers. Here is a collection of selected resources currently available:

Additional print and electronic materials have been created by the immersion program on Pine Ridge.

- *Lakota Grammar Handbook* by Lakota Language Consortium, 2016. (ISBN [978-1-941461-11-2](#))
- *Lakota Vocab Builder* (a smartphone app)
- *Lakhótiya Wóglaka Po! - Speak Lakota! : Level 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 Textbooks and Audio CDs* by Lakota Language Consortium. (elementary/secondary school level)
- *New Lakota Dictionary*. (ISBN [0-9761082-9-1](#))
- *New Lakota Dictionary Online* (<https://www.lakotadictionary.org>). Learners' forum, word search and translation page, practice lessons. Free registration.
- *Lakota: A Language Course for Beginners* by Oglala Lakota College (ISBN [0-88432-609-8](#)) (with companion 15 CDs/Tapes) (high school/college level)
- *Reading and Writing the Lakota Language* by Albert White Hat Sr. (ISBN [0-87480-572-4](#)) (with companion 2 tapes) (high school/college level)
- *University of Colorado Lakhota Project: Beginning Lakhota*, vol. 1 & 2 (with companion tapes), *Elementary Bilingual Dictionary* and *Graded Readings*, (high school/college level)
- *Lakota Dictionary: Lakota-English/English-Lakota, New Comprehensive Edition* by Eugene Buechel, S.J. & Paul Manhart (ISBN [0-8032-6199-3](#))
- *English-Lakota Dictionary* by Bruce Ingham, RoutledgeCurzon, ISBN [0-7007-1378-6](#)
- *A Grammar of Lakota* by Eugene Buechel, S.J. (OCLC [4609002](#) (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/4609002>); professional level)
- The article by Rood & Taylor, in^[9] (professional level)
- *Dakota Texts* by Ella Deloria (a bilingual, interlinear collection of folktales and folk narratives, plus commentaries). (University of Nebraska Press, ISBN [0-8032-6660-X](#); professional level) (Note: the University of South Dakota edition is monolingual, with only the English renditions.)
- A "Lakota Toddler" app designed for children ages 2–9 is available for the iPhone.^[28]
- *Matho Waunsila Tiwahe: The Lakota Berenstain Bears*. DVD of 20 episodes of The Berenstain Bears, dubbed in Lakota with fluent Native speakers.

Lakota influences in English

Just as people from different regions of countries have accents, Lakota Native Americans who speak English have some distinct speech patterns. These patterns are displayed in their grammatical sequences and can be heard through some phonological differences. These unique characteristics are also observed in Lakota youth, even those who only learned English.^[29]

Appearances in popular culture

Lakota is featured prominently in the 1990 film *Dances with Wolves*, in which much of the dialogue is spoken in Lakota (with English subtitles).

Lakota is briefly featured in the 2018 video game *Red Dead Redemption 2*, spoken by the aboriginal character Chief Rains Falls.

Lakota is used in the HBO series *Westworld* by the 'hosts' that portray Native Americans or "Indians" and "strays", better known as members of the Ghost Nation. Most of the dialogue in the episode "[Kiksuya](#)" (season 2, episode 8) is in Lakota.

In the Netflix series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, the character [Jacqueline White](#) and her family occasionally make use of Lakota.

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Further reading

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External links

- [Lakota Language Consortium](http://www.lakhota.org) (<http://www.lakhota.org>)
- [Lakḥól'iya Owaákhiye Othí language forum](http://lakotadictionary.org) (<http://lakotadictionary.org>)
- [New Lakota Dictionary online](https://www.lakotadictionary.org/phpBB3/nldo.php) (<https://www.lakotadictionary.org/phpBB3/nldo.php>)
- [Omniglot](http://www.omniglot.com/writing/sioux.htm) (<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/sioux.htm>)
- [Our Languages: Lakota](https://web.archive.org/web/20131117155348/http://www.sicc.sk.ca/lakota.html) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20131117155348/http://www.sicc.sk.ca/lakota.html>) (Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre)
- [Niobrara Wocekiye Wowapi: The Niobrara Prayer Book \(1991\)](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Lakota/index.html) (<http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Lakota/index.html>) Episcopal Church prayers in Lakota
- [Palatalization in Lakota](https://www.ucalgary.ca/lingcpl/volume_25/Telfer_edited.pdf) (https://www.ucalgary.ca/lingcpl/volume_25/Telfer_edited.pdf)

- [Swadesh vocabulary lists for Lakota and other Siouan languages \(https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Swadesh_lists_for_Siouan_languages\)](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Swadesh_lists_for_Siouan_languages) (from Wiktionary)
 - [Tusweca Tiospaye \(http://www.liveandtell.com/user/28\)](http://www.liveandtell.com/user/28), language learning
 - [ELAR archive of Lakota Language: Translation of Songs and Speeches \(http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0263\)](http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0263)
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